



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FAQs

A Publication of the Public Service Commission of
South Carolina



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

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Q. WHO ARE THE COMMISSIONERS AND HOW ARE THEY ELECTED?

- **John E. “Butch” Howard**, District 1
- **David A. Wright**, Chairman, District 2
- **Randy Mitchell**, Vice Chairman, District 3
- **Elizabeth B. “Lib” Fleming**, District 4
- **G. O’Neal Hamilton**, District 5
- **Nikiya “Nikki” Hall**, District 6
- **Swain E. Whitfield**, At-Large
- More information on the Commissioners can be found under the “Commissioners” tab on the PSC Website at <http://www.psc.sc.gov/Pages/default.aspx>
- The State Regulation of Public Utilities Review Committee screens and nominates candidates to the General Assembly. The Commissioners are elected by the General Assembly and serve staggered four-year terms.
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Q. WHAT IS THE COMMISSION'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY?

- The Public Service Commission of South Carolina has exclusive jurisdiction to establish fair and reasonable rates for services of the utilities under the Commission's jurisdiction. It must balance South Carolina's citizens' need for reliable services and reasonable rates with the need for utilities to earn a reasonable return on investment. The Commission protects consumers' interest while abiding by legal standards in setting rates.
- All matters scheduled for public hearing are heard by the Commissioners or in special cases, by an appointed hearing examiner in open session.
- In regulating cases, the Commission does not guarantee profits to service providers. It is the company's responsibility to make prudent, sound business decisions to produce earnings.
- Assisting the Commissioners are experts on utility operations. The South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff is a party to every proceeding before the Commission and may provide testimony and/or make recommendations. To find out more about the Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS), go to <http://www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov> or you may reach ORS at 1-800-922-1531.
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Q. WHY CAN'T I TALK TO THE COMMISSIONERS OR COMMISSION STAFF ABOUT MY CASE OR ANY OTHER PROCEEDING BEFORE THE COMMISSION?

- The Commissioners and the Commission Staff are not allowed to communicate, directly or indirectly, regarding any issue that is an issue in any proceeding or can reasonably be expected to become an issue in any proceeding with any person without notice and opportunity for all parties to participate in the communication. Further, no person shall communicate, directly or indirectly, regarding any issue in any proceeding or can reasonably be expected to become an issue in any proceeding with any Commissioner, hearing officer, or Commission employee without notice and opportunity for all parties to participate in the communication.
- ([S.C. Code Ann. Section 58-3-260](#))
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Q. WHO CAN I TALK TO REGARDING PROBLEMS WITH MY UTILITY?

- If you are unable to reach a resolution with your utility, please contact the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff at 1-800-922-1531.
- For more information regarding the Office of Regulatory Staff go to:
<http://www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov>
- If you are unable to reach a resolution with the ORS and the utility, please refer to the next slide regarding filing a complaint with the PSC.
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Q. AS AN INDIVIDUAL CONSUMER, HOW DO I FILE A COMPLAINT WITH THE COMMISSION?

- Prior to filing a complaint with the Commission, contact your utility and the ORS as they may be able to assist you in resolving your complaint.
- The form to file a complaint with the Commission and directions to complete the form are located at <http://www.psc.sc.gov/consumerinfo/Pages/FileAComplaint.aspx>
- Copies of this form can also be obtained by calling (803)896-5100.
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Q. WHAT IS REGULATED BY THE COMMISSION?

- The Commission regulates investor-owned water and wastewater utilities, telephone utilities, electrical utilities, gas utilities, and motor vehicle carriers as defined in [Title 58](#) of the South Carolina Code.
- As found in the SC Code of Laws, there are exceptions to these regulated entities, such as, the Commission **does not** regulate municipalities.
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Q. HOW DOES THE COMMISSION DECIDE A RATE CASE?

- Steps in a typical rate case include:
 - Step One: The utility files a petition
 - The utility requesting a rate increase first serves a notice of intent. It then files a rate case petition with supporting data as required by the Commission's regulations. The Commission establishes deadlines for the publication of notices to the public regarding the rate case petition, deadlines for intervention, and deadlines for pre-filing of testimony by parties to the case. All parties have the opportunity to pre-file testimony prior to the hearing. The Commission sets the hearing date. By law, the Commission must issue an order approving or disapproving the proposed changes in rates within six months after the petition is filed. The South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff represents the public interest in proceedings before the Commission and is a party of record.
 - Interested parties intervene – requests to intervene are considered by the Commission. (See Commission [Regulation 103-825](#))
 - Step Two: Formal rate hearings conducted
 - Generally, the utility presents its case at a public hearing conducted by the commissioners within 120 days after the initial filing. Any intervenors and the ORS may also present testimony at the hearing. Public witnesses usually present their testimony the first day or, if established by the Commission, at local public hearings held in the evening at 6 p.m. All witnesses are subject to cross-examination by the parties to the proceeding. Public witnesses are not parties to the case and cannot cross-examine other witnesses or ask questions of the Commissioners.
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Q. HOW DOES THE COMMISSION DECIDE A RATE CASE?

- Step Three: Commission issues rate order
 - All parties involved – the utility, Commissioners, Commission Staff, ORS, and intervenors – review the transcript and records of the hearings and file recommendations, a proposed order and/or briefs.
 - At a subsequent administrative session, held once a week, or at a special called meeting, the Commissioners decide what, if any, rate increases to grant and when the utility can put the new rates into effect. The Commissioners must make this decision and issue its order within six months of the original filing date or the utility is legally entitled to 100 percent of its request. This rule does not apply to electric utilities.
 - After a decision on the rate case, the Commission issues a final order. Within 10 days after service of the order, an electric company, telecommunications company, or intervenor may ask the Commission to reconsider its decision. Water, sewer, gas, or transportation companies, and intervenors have 20 days to ask for reconsideration. The utility and intervenors may appeal the Commission's decision to the South Carolina Supreme Court within 30 days after the Commission issues an Order on the utility's request for reconsideration.
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Q. HOW CAN I OBTAIN COPIES OF PUBLICLY- AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION?

- Copies of publicly-available documents may be downloaded from the Commission's Docket Management System at <http://dms.psc.sc.gov>
- Also, copies of tariffs that have been filed with the Commission are available on its website at: <http://etariff.psc.sc.gov> or can be obtained by calling (803)896-5100
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Q. IF I AM FILING TESTIMONY OR A PETITION OR APPLICATION, HOW MANY COPIES OF DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE FILED WITH THE COMMISSION?

- If a document is filed electronically, the filer is *not* required to file any additional copies with the Commission.
- A filer is required to file one original copy of any document filed with the Commission, if the document is *not* filed electronically.
- A copy should be provided to ORS and any other parties of record.
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Q. WHERE CAN I OBTAIN COPIES OF FORMS?

- Forms can be downloaded from the Commission's website at the following address:
<http://www.psc.sc.gov/Pages/Forms.aspx>
- Additionally, forms can be downloaded from the Office of Regulatory Staff's website at the following address: www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov
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Q. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS TO OBTAIN A CERTIFICATE OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY TO OPERATE A MOTOR CARRIER UNDER THE COMMISSION'S JURISDICTION.

- The forms and directions to complete an application to operate as a motor carrier are located on the Commission's website at <http://www.psc.sc.gov/Pages/Forms.aspx>
- The process to obtain a Certificate is also described on these forms.
- Copies of these forms can also be obtained by calling (803)896-5100.
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Q. WHAT IS THE STATUS OF MY APPLICATION?

- Copies of all publicly-available documents are available on the Commission's website on its Docket Management System (DMS).
- After the Clerk's Office has assigned a docket number, you can review your case online by accessing DMS (<http://dms.psc.sc.gov/dockets>).
- To view your case, enter the docket number assigned to your case. The docket number is in the format yyyy-nnn-l (e.g. 2009-401-E) and will be located on any correspondence to you from the Commission.
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Q. HOW DO I FILE A TARIFF?

- Tariffs can be filed electronically on the Commission's ETariff System located at <http://etariff.psc.sc.gov>
- Additionally, an online user guide on how to use the electronic tariff filing system can be found at: <http://etariff.psc.sc.gov/home/help.cfm>
- A filer can receive additional assistance by calling the Commission at (803)896-5100
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Q. WHAT IS THE COMMISSION'S WEBSITE ADDRESS?

- The Commission's website address is www.psc.sc.gov
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Q. HOW CAN I CONTACT THE COMMISSION VIA E-MAIL?

- The Commission's contact e-mail address is contact@psc.sc.gov
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Q. FAQs FOR RESIDENTIAL ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS

- A list of Frequently Asked Questions for residential electric customers can be found here: [Frequently Asked Questions for Residential Electric Consumers.pdf](#)
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FAQs

- This has been a publication of the Public Service Commission of South Carolina
- If you have any questions about the information contained herein, please do not hesitate to contact the Commission:
 - 803-896-5100
 - contact@psc.sc.gov

